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ABSTRACT

The Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development is designing the employer based career education model. The model, now at the advanced design phase and soon to be pilot tested, reflects: (1) a comprehensive educational program, (2) the needs of youth, ages 13-18, (3) an educational system to be controlled by public and private employers, (4) the importance of career exploration, (5) an individualized program, (6) the need for performance-based learning objectives, and (7) an educational program that is economically feasible. Another significant aspect of the model is the integrated curriculum approach to meeting the following needs of students: (1) self-awareness, (2) self sufficiency, (3) decision-making skills, (4) social skills, (5) basic cognitive skills, (6) career skills, and (7) skills of employability. (JS)

Employer Based Career Education (EBCE)*

A Model Developed at the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development

Bela H. Banathy and Robert M. Peterson

The Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development has a contractual arrangement with the Office of Education to study the feasibility of Employer Based Career Education (EBCE) and engage in design and pilot work in order to test feasibility.

Our initial analysis indicated a requirement for four sequential phases:

- an exploratory analysis of the notion of EBCE (Phase One)
- in-depth feasibility studies in the various key areas of EBCE (Phase Two)
- some advanced design work (Phase Three), and
- pilot experimentation and field test (Phase Four).

During Phase One we have asked five questions:

- why Career Education in general and why EBCE in particular
- to what issues -- problems -- needs should EBCE respond
- what are desired outcomes of EBCE
- given outcomes: what might EBCE look like
- what are issues and areas one should explore and study in assessing the feasibility of EBCE?

In response to the last question we have identified some twenty-five areas which indicated a requirement for in-depth study and analysis.

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Seven of the areas related to input studies, six to the curriculum model, eight studies focused on support systems and interface studies and the rest on the identification of R&D requirements and R&D work.

During Phase Two we have conducted an in-depth study of feasibility in the areas identified and concluded that the conceptual model that has emerged as the outcome of our studies has proved itself to be feasible and worthy of pilot testing.

We are now in the advanced design phase (Phase Three) and are making arrangements for pilot testing the model (Phase Four).

I. THE EBCE CONCEPT

The EBCE model to be implemented by Far West Laboratory is defined by the seven basic features listed below. These features have been derived from earlier documents issued by the Office of Education, from analytic and conceptual studies at Far West Laboratory, and from discussions held with members of the Office of Education Task Force on Career Education.

1. Total secondary program. EBCE will be a comprehensive educational program, combining academic, vocational, social, and personal preparation of the student. It is intended as an additional option for the junior-high and high-school student, rather than as a supplement to the public school or other programs.

2. Cross-section of students. The program is designed to attract and serve a cross-section of youth, ages 13 to 18. It will not be a specialized program for a particular subset of students, such as drop-out, college-bound, or economically disadvantaged, but is intended to accommodate all of these sub-groups. During the first year of operation, the Far West program will concentrate on ages 16 and 17, but will ensure that the student body is heterogeneous with respect to sex, race, and college-bound versus non college-bound.

3. Control outside the schools. The educational program will not be based in the existing public schools. It will be controlled at both the policy level and the operational-management level by an organization outside the public school system. Initially this control will be provided by Far West Laboratory. As soon as practicable, control will be transferred to a consortium of public and private employers -- those who supply the real-life settings and resources used in the learning process.

4. Career exploration. Each learner in the program will be exposed to a variety of careers in order to provide him with reasonably

diverse and substantial experience on which to base his selection of a career path.

5. Individualized. The learning process will be tailored to the individual student's interests, abilities, pace, and style. He will participate, in a very real sense, in planning his learning program and will assume increasing responsibility for his own education.

6. Performance based. Learning objectives for each student will be in terms of required or desired competencies, and his educational progress will be judged on the basis of his ability to demonstrate those competencies. The emphasis is on acquired skills and knowledge rather than on the process by which they were acquired.

7. Cost-comparable. A major design criterion is to achieve favorable cost-benefit relationships so that the resultant system is comparable in cost with the public schools and is economically feasible.

II. EDUCATIONAL GOALS OF EBCE

The purpose of EBCE is to prepare each student for the diverse roles of a competent adult. Students will be exposed to real-life experiences during their "school years" in order to acquire the understanding, attitudes, habits and skills they will need to survive and prosper in a complex, rapidly changing technological society.

The concept of Career Education focuses on several major needs of students, in terms of preparation for choosing and attaining their career (life) goals:

1. Self-awareness. Each student should be helped to acquire knowledge and understanding of himself -- his goals, abilities, interests and values so he will be able to realistically plan and pursue his life path.

2. Self-sufficiency. Each student should be helped to develop the necessary knowledge and skills to maintain good health and proper hygiene; to manage efficiently personal finances and other resources; to accept responsibility for and function comfortably in a sequence of mature social roles; and to pursue self-fulfilling goals in his personal development.

3. Decision-making skills. Each student should be helped to develop his ability to gather information, analyze it critically, and make judgments and decisions based upon the available information.

4. Social skills. Each student should be helped to develop the skills required to communicate effectively with other persons, develop understanding and tolerance of individual and group differences and values, and work cooperatively with others in group endeavors.

5. Basic cognitive skills. Each student should be helped to develop skills of logical analysis as well as the ability to read, write and compute. These skills are essential to personal development, continued education, and work satisfaction.

6. Career skills. Each student should be exposed to a broad range of occupational, avocational and leisure activities, so that he has the information and experience necessary to make rational career choices in each of these realms. Each student should be encouraged to develop some minimal skills representative of vocational/avocational areas that interest him as bases for further growth and development, and to choose a specific career path.

7. Skills of employability. Each student should be helped to develop basic skills essential to seeking, acquiring and maintaining employment so that he may compete more successfully for available job opportunities.

III. THE EBCE CURRICULUM

A. There is a set of characteristics that defines the EBCE Curriculum and establishes EBCE as an alternative to existing schooling.

1. The EBCE Curriculum is integrated. The prevailing practice is to structure education into academic, vocational, and general education domains and furthermore to divide these domains into subject matters. The EBCE Curriculum Model integrates vocational, avocational and leisure pursuits with the intellectual, social and personal development domains. (See Figure 1).

2. Curriculum is built around the individual. One of the key dimensions in which the model is an alternative is that while existing schooling is built around classes of students, the EBCE model is designed around the individual learner.

The prevailing practice of schooling today is to provide a generalized curriculum which is derived from stated educational goals. Attempts made to adjust curriculum to the individual learner cope -- at best -- only with differences in learning rate. Curriculum content, its context, and method of presentation are identical. Career, however, is unique to a given individual and the individual is also a unique being. Applied to education, the uniqueness notion of career and individuality will lead us to design curriculum in which not only the mode but also the content and the context of the experience are tailor-made to fit the individual.

3. Another key characteristic of our curriculum is that learning is never context free; it is provided within the functional context of real life situation. Life situations are vocational, avocational, leisure and other involvements which the learner may pursue and which -- in an important way -- provide situational framework of his learning experience. These situations are the functional contexts in which learning takes place

Career Education: A Curriculum Model

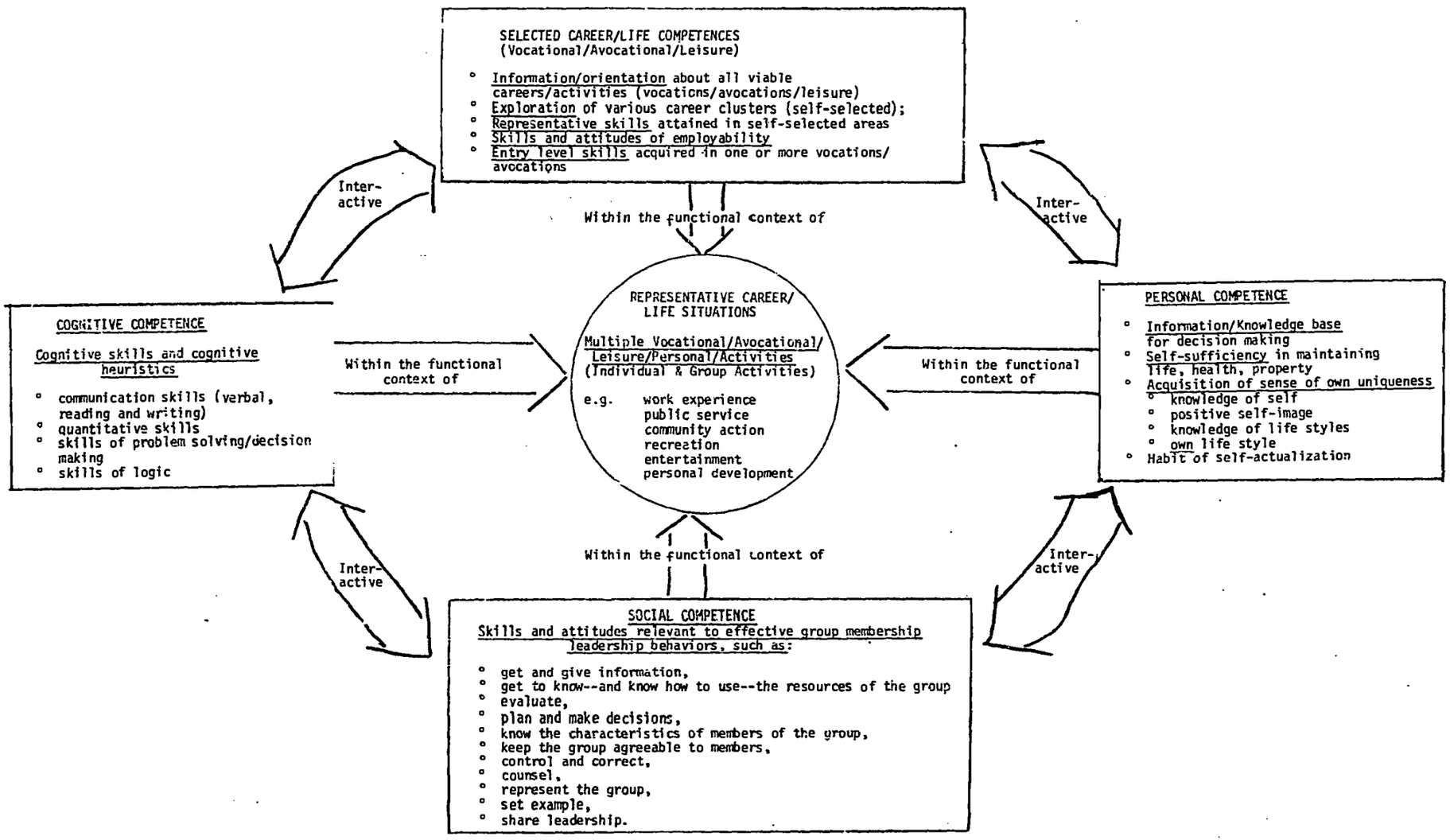

Figure 1

in the four competence domains (intellectual, social, personal and vocational/avocational/leisure). Life situations are here and now rather than something in the distant future for which we need to be prepared. The notion is that the best way to prepare for the future is to help the individual to acquire competences which enable him to perform successfully in life situations now.

4. The educational experience projected in our model is performance based. The student will not be required to undergo an experience where he can already demonstrate competence and he will be allowed to move on whenever he has acquired the desired skill or knowledge.

5. This approach is in sharp contrast with the prevailing practice of assigning students to classes, requiring their attendance, and evaluating their performance on tests. In EBCE curriculum experiences are planned, programmed and monitored on a partnership basis involving the learner, the staff, and other resource personnel. Through such planning and programming, arrangements are being made in the environment of the learner to enhance mastery of the learning task. The learner is actively and intensively involved in planned experiences, and staff and other resources facilitate the success of the learner.

6. Responsive Learning Environments are created. The resource boundaries of the conventional school are set around the physical plant with only occasional excursions allowed beyond the boundaries of the plant. A student of a typical high school can legitimately spend all his school time within the physical boundaries of the school. In our model no such boundaries exist. The resources available to the learner are those of the larger community. New territories for learning are identified, developed and new learning environments created which respond to the learner's requirements in attaining specific learning.

As we look at the characteristics described above, we recognize that some of those have been implemented in various pioneering projects. The uniqueness of EBCE is that it brings together all these characteristics into one operational model for the attainment of outcomes that are specific to EBCE. This model projects a novel organization of an educational experience, and a new configuration of innovative educational approaches.

B. The Instructional and Learner's Systems

The curriculum characterized above is operationalized through the activation and interaction of two systems: the instructional and learner's systems.

The Instructional System presents:

- A content structure that is developed in the four curriculum domains (Figure 1). Through a process of progressive specification the content is defined at the most detailed-module-level by: (1) performance or experiential objectives, (2) objective relevant measures and (3) prerequisites.
- A set of exemplary (alternative) activities that represent ways by which objectives might be attained.
- An information system that provides easy access to information on (1) people, (2) materials and media, (3) procedures, and (4) territories that are available to EBCE and that can be organized to create the resources, environment, and procedures for potential learning activities.

The product of the Instructional System is a great variety of learning opportunities available to the learner.

The Learner's System introduces structures, operational arrangement, and resources by which the learner's activities can be planned, programmed, implemented, and monitored. The activity is built based on information

available from the instructional system, it provides for the student's EBCE experience in the context of real life in selected vocational, avocational, leisure and other life situations. Purposeful activities brought together and sequenced in time and organized into a situational scheme become the student's experience trail. The critical characteristic of the experience trail is that the learner always knows (1) what trail he is on, (2) why, (3) where it leads, (4) how far he has gone at any given time, and (5) what he has to do to make further progress along the trail.

The product of the Learner's System is personal growth and knowledge, competence, attitudes, and values that the student has acquired.

IV. CONCLUSION

The purpose of the Far West Laboratory's project is to develop and field test a pilot version of the model just described. We have analyzed, amplified, and refined the EBCE concept into a solid working idea of what we seek to build, and have completed a preliminary design, a blueprint specifying how to begin. We are ready to move from design to empirical development.

The model will take more concrete shape as we develop it in the field. We will use formative information gained through practical experience to modify the model as we go, retaining and improving what works, and discarding what does not. Our plan is to create a test bed in Oakland, beginning with a small sample of students, refining techniques, steadily developing and testing the evolving system.

Our goal is to develop a system that is exportable and repeatable. This requires systematically "looking through" the Oakland model, at every step along the way, to insure that the procedures and materials we develop will serve as an effective guide for future implementers.

If our model works, our end product will consist of more than a successful small-scale operation in Oakland. Our goal is to be able to provide a potential user with a complete set of guidelines, enabling him to decide whether and determine how to implement and operate an EBCE system including a full systems description, cost analysis, inventory of resources, plus the necessary documentation and supporting materials to facilitate implementation.